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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR GHAFARI PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO
PRESIDENT TURK AND CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER JANSA

Classified By: Amb. Yousif B. Ghafari, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On May 29, four days after arriving in Ljubljana, Yousif B. Ghafari presented his credentials as the new U.S. Ambassador to Slovenia to President Turk. At a follow-on courtesy call the President and the Ambassador agreed on the need for greater U.S. business activity in Slovenia, and the President commented briefly on his recent participation at the World Economic Forum conference at Sharm El Sheikh. Later that day, the Ambassador made his first call on Prime Minister Jansa. The conversation focused on the June 9-10 visit of President Bush for the U.S.-EU Summit, the importance of U.S. engagement in Europe, the need for additional military training in Afghanistan, and current developments in the Western Balkans. Both senior Slovene officials judged U.S.-Slovene bilateral relations to be excellent and welcomed future consultations with the Ambassador. End Summary.

President Turk Welcomes Ambassador, s
Focus on Entrepreneurship

¶2. (C) In a simple but moving ceremony, President Danilo Turk accepted the credentials of Yousif B. Ghafari as the new Ambassador to Slovenia. Following the formal ceremony, the President invited the Ambassador to a conversation that lasted approximately thirty minutes. The Ambassador was accompanied by DCM and DATT; Turk was joined by his Chief of Staff Mojca Tos, Foreign Policy Advisor Dusan Snoj, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs State Secretary Andrej Ster.

¶3. (C) President Turk welcomed the Ambassador, remarking that he should experience few problems during his time in Slovenia given the excellent tradition of strong bilateral relations. Turk mentioned the upcoming visit of President Bush, recalling his memorable visit in 2001 and commenting that Slovenia is happy and proud to welcome him again in both a multilateral (U.S.-EU) and a bilateral context. The Ambassador responded that President Bush is looking forward to the visit and he thanked the Slovenian Government for all it has done in its Presidency of the EU to promote transatlantic cooperation, and as the host of the U.S.-EU summit to ensure a successful program.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador discussed his priorities for his tour in Slovenia, including fostering educational and cultural exchanges and promoting entrepreneurship. President Turk responded that these were excellent areas for future cooperation. In particular, he noted that further development of high tech business and greater numbers of small and medium-sized enterprises would be useful to

Slovenia as it completes its economic transition. He stressed that Slovenia needs to be more open to foreign investment and that entrepreneurship is vital to stimulate creativity and partnership with business leaders in other countries.

¶5. (C) President Turk recounted briefly his impressions of the May 18-20 World Economic Forum on the Middle East in Sharm El Sheikh. He noted that there was not as much discussion of Mediterranean cooperation as expected, but he found interesting the conversations about how to deal with Iran. Many participants argued for combining the current system of sanctions on Iran with some kind of regional security agreement in the Gulf. He commented that from his own experience at the United Nations, regional security systems are often very useful supplements to global security regimes.

Prime Minister Stresses Importance
of U.S. Role in Europe

¶6. (C) Later on May 29, Ambassador Ghafari met Prime Minister Janez Jansa for a thirty minute introductory meeting. Jansa underscored the vitality of U.S.-Slovenian relations recalling that America has been the promised land for many Slovenes over the last hundred years. He expressed gratitude for U.S. assistance to Europe during troubled times, mentioning in particular the mid-1990s Balkan crisis during which U.S. intervention was crucial to stop atrocities and initiate stabilization of the region. He told the Ambassador that he had just come from an event commemorating his arrest during the time of Slovenia's struggle for

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independence. He noted that the military prison where he was incarcerated is now a youth hostel, which was praised by the Lonely Planet travel guide as one of the best hostels in Europe. Jansa characterized this transformation as a great symbol of Slovenia's progress over the past twenty years.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador and PM Jansa discussed the June 9-10 visit of President Bush for the U.S.-EU summit. Jansa stated that there has been good progress on the summit declaration but noted that the poultry issue is still pending. He said that he is keeping abreast of the situation and doing what he can to promote EU consensus on a solution.

¶8. (C) Ambassador Ghafari raised the issue of Afghanistan and urged the PM to strongly consider reconfiguring Slovenia's deployment in Afghanistan into an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT). The PM responded that Slovenia has increased its deployment of soldiers to Afghanistan by twenty percent. He stated that more than ten percent of Slovenia's small military force is deployed abroad, with the primary focus on operations in Kosovo and, to a lesser extent, Bosnia. Nevertheless, he agreed that we must increase our efforts in Afghanistan and that additional military training there is crucial. He promised to talk with the Minister of Defense about the OMLT proposal. The Ambassador encouraged him to raise this with President Bush during their June 10 bilateral meeting if Slovenia is ready to discuss the matter seriously with SHAPE.

¶9. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question about Slovenia's role in the Western Balkans after its EU Presidency ends, the PM said that Slovenia will remain deeply engaged in the process of stabilizing the region and promoting EU expansion. He mentioned that the Government had established the Center for European Perspective to funnel assistance to Southeast European governments and NGOs to build civil society and implement European standards in government and law. He said that numerous conferences and training programs have been held and will continue to go on. On Macedonia, Jansa expressed concern that the name issue will be a barrier to the country's EU accession talks just

as it was for its NATO accession. He hoped that early elections could result in more flexibility on Macedonia's part, and suggested that the proposed name "New Macedonia" was a good idea.

¶10. (C) The Ambassador concluded by saying that one of his top priorities is to attract additional U.S. investment to Slovenia, and PM Jansa welcomed this initiative. Jansa looked forward to working with the Ambassador and invited the Ambassador to join him in climbing Slovenia's highest mountain peak, Triglav, next month.

Comment

¶11. (C) Both leaders were engaged and eager to get to know the Ambassador, stressing the importance of transatlantic ties and our strong bilateral relationship. The government's flexibility and responsiveness in scheduling the Ambassador's credentialing ceremony as soon as possible reflects its willingness to do what it takes for a successful U.S. Presidential visit June 9-10.

GHAFARI